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ZFF NIACTS & SECRETARY ONLY

E.O. 12065: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, ES

SUBJECT: STATEMENT ON EL SALVADOR

PETER TARNOFF FOR SECRETARY; CARACAS FOR AMB. BOWDLER;
BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC; ROME ALSO FOR VATICAN

1. THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON EL SALVADOR WAS RELEASED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO THE PRESS AT 1430 EST DECEMBER 12.

2. BEGIN TEXT.

DECEMBER 12 STATEMENT ON THE SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL MISSION TO EL SALVADOR - DECEMBER 6-9, 1980

WILLIAM D. ROGERS, FORMER UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER PRESIDENT FORD, AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE WILLIAM G. BOWDLER MET WITH THE PRESIDENT YESTERDAY TO REPORT ON THEIR SPECIAL MISSION TO EL SALVADOR. TODAY THEY ARE BRIEFING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ON THEIR MISSION. THEY ARE ALSO SUBMITTING A CONFIDENTIAL WRITTEN REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT.

DURING THEIR DECEMBER 6 THROUGH 9 STAY IN EL SALVADOR, THE SPECIAL MISSION MEMBERS HELD A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADOR WHITE AND THE EMBASSY STAFF, THE GOVERNING

JUNTA, THE ARCHBISHOP, THE CHIEF OF POLICE, THE SPECIAL SALVADORAN INVESTIGATING COMMISSION, NUNS FROM THE SAME ORDER AS TWO OF THE MURDERED WOMEN, AND OTHERS. THEY TOLD THOSE WITH WHOM THEY MET THAT THE MURDER OF THE FOUR AMERICAN CHURCH-WOMEN HAD SHOCKED THE CONSCIENCE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THEY EXPRESSED OUR GRAVE CONCERN THAT THE INCREASED INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR RAISED A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN A MINIMAL DEGREE OF CIVIL ORDER. THEY URGED PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE ACTION NOT ONLY TO APPREHEND AND PUNISH THE MURDERERS BUT ALSO TO CONTROL THE VIOLENCE AND PREVENT SUCH TRAGIC INCIDENTS FROM RECURRING.

THE SPECIAL MISSION REPORTED THAT THUS FAR THERE WAS NO DIRECT EVIDENCE OF WHO COMMITTED THE CRIME. ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE SECURITY FORCE INVOLVEMENT IN THE CASE, THE MISSION URGED THE AUTHORITIES OF EL SALVADOR TO CONDUCT A COMPLETE, THOROUGH AND PROFESSIONAL INVESTIGATION OF THESE MURDERS SO THAT THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE ANSWERED AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

THE GOVERNING JUNTA REQUESTED THAT THE MISSION COMMUNICATE TO THE PRESIDENT, THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES EL SALVADOR'S PROFOUND REGRET WITH RESPECT TO THE CRIME. THEY TOLD OUR MISSION THAT THE INVESTIGATION WOULD BE PURSUED WHEREVER IT LED, ANYWHERE IN THE COUNTRY AT ANY LEVEL.

TO THIS END, THE JUNTA HAS APPOINTED AN OFFICIAL FOUR MAN AD HOC INVESTIGATING COMMISSION. THE COMMISSION, WHICH IS ACTIVELY PURSUING ITS TASK, HAS REQUESTED OUR TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT. SEVERAL AGENTS OF THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION ARE ALREADY IN EL SALVADOR PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE COMMISSION. WE WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH THIS INVESTIGATION.

OUR SPECIAL EMISSARIES ALSO DISCUSSED THE DESIRABILITY OF PERMITTING OUTSIDE OBSERVERS OF THE INVESTIGATION. THE COMMISSION HAS WELCOMED THIS. WE EXPECT THAT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WILL BE ABLE TO PLAY SUCH A ROLE. OUR EMBASSY WILL ALSO BE CLOSELY MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF THE INVESTIGATION.

WE CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT OF THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION, ITS EFFORTS TO DATE, ITS DESIRE TO HAVE U.S. INVESTIGATIVE EXPERTS ASSIST IN ITS WORK AND ITS WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT OUTSIDE OBSERVERS TO MONITOR THE INVESTIGATION AS POSITIVE RESPONSES TO OUR MISSION.

IN THE COURSE OF THE MISSION'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNING JUNTA AND OTHERS, IT WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE A CONSENSUS ON THE NEED TO ACT QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO INVESTIGATE THOROUGHLY THE KILLINGS OF OUR CITIZENS, TO GAIN GREATER CONTROL OVER THE WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE, TO UNDERTAKE A REFORM AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE GOVERNMENT AND TO MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE, TO MAKE THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND MORE RESPONSIVE TO DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES, TO IMPLEMENT THE REFORM PROGRAM AND TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH DEMOCRATIC LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION TO END THE TERRIBLE INTERNAL CONFLICT THAT IS COSTING SO MANY LIVES.

NEGOTIATIONS ARE GOING ON IN EL SALVADOR BETWEEN THE

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE MILITARY TOWARDS THESE ENDS. STATEMENTS BY SALVADORAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED INDICATE THAT SOME SIGNIFICANT RESTRUCTURING OF THE GOVERNMENT AND SHIFTS IN MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE ANTICIPATED. THE U.S. IS READY TO RESUME ITS ASSISTANCE TO EL SALVADOR UPON SUCH PROGRESS.

WE WILL BE FOLLOWING THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND CAREFULLY ASSESSING THE WAY IN WHICH THEY IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT PURSUING ITS REFORM PROGRAM, IN CONTROLLING VIOLENCE AND IN RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS. PROGRESS TOWARDS THESE OBJECTIVES IS ESSENTIAL TO AVOID FURTHER POLARIZATION, EITHER TO THE EXTREME RIGHT OR TO THE RADICAL LEFT.

END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER